

OCTOBER 19, 1972

Autumn screwworms have passed the epidemic stage. Old crop bull flies are working overtime; new crop flies are as furious as man-eating tigers.

Any warm blooded animal is subject to attack. The slightest thornprick is certain to be infected. Old ladies doing needle work had better watch their stroke. Anything raw or rubbed is going to be hit. Newspapers say that ranchers themselves are going to have to stop the siege. To me that sounds like depending on Little Orphan Annie and her dog Sandy to stop the coyotes.

Ranchers aren't in any shape to shut off their alarm clocks in the mornings. Many more days of hunting and hauling wormy stock will have the herders bushed up worse than their quarry.

Work has already doubled once and quadrupled the next round. Everytime a bunch of stock is penned, it takes the rest of the day to pull out the worm cases.

Plenty of the hombres doing the pulling out ought to have someone doing some pushing. Most of us are getting old enough that we haven't got any business pulling out the stopper from the medicine bottle, much less wrestling old ewes from the herd.

But giant strides backwards have occurred ever since the outbreak earlier this year. The country has been working on 1959 model horses doing work that would break down a three year old. Men have been leaving the houses that should have been doing the cooking, and all that's been accomplished wouldn't much more than pay for the spray and medicine that's been put on the wormies.

I got to thinking about that the other morning. Auction rings are going to be overflowing with culls when ranches start dumping their worm traps. Special sales will be required to handle survivors of the hospitals.

Yesterday we turned 90 head of cured sheep out to a bigger trap. I'll bet that of the 90, half will end up in cans of potted meat in the city.

Livestock aren't the only things that have suffered. I talked to a San Angelo doctor who was finding a few cases in humans.

City doctors don't hunt wormies like we do. No telling how many cases they could gather if they'd work the brush in the parks and on the rivers.

Angelo has a lot of places where a wormy hombre can hide out. There could be a 100 cases shading in the darkness of the wool capital's fancy beer joints alone.

They keep those lounges so dark that a set of Siamese twins could get mixed up. As long as the doctors wait for the wormies to come in, the town will be a regular breeding spot. It'd be some state of affairs if the wranglers had stood back and waited for their range subjects to turn themselves in.

Furthermore, town healers don't seem to know how to doctor a case of worms once they catch one. This doctor said he was using chloroform without a fly repellant. I don't have to tell you that chloroform was replaced nearly 40 years ago, and anyone smart enough to wield a tecole brush knows that you've got to have some sort of fly repellant to ever get a case healed up.

I sure was curious to know what other medicine he was using. He's probably still fighting warts with stump water.

Unless the Mission screwworm center sends some flies tonight, the Shortgrass Country is going to be turned into one big fly incubator. You can't go from the barn to the house without finding something that needs doctoring.

Frost had better get here soon. I wish I'd saved my money as a young man. Scaling over these rocks is an awful way to go.